

# Spirituality From the Inside

A guide to breaking free of those  
things that limit us

By Rev. Mark Maxey

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Dharma Seeds Foundation  
Post Office Box 61175  
Oklahoma City, OK 73146-1175  
<http://dharmaseeds.st-raphael-monastery.org>

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## Introduction

We, as human beings, always hurt when we are placed into a situation created by our bad judgments or actions. That pain can cause us to wither deep inside our soul as it cries out for forgiveness, acceptance, or simple acknowledgement. This pain is felt many times as we progress on our journey into oneness with God.

You are not alone. You are never alone. However, we must dig our way out of our situation whether that place is behind granite walls or walls our human psyche has built up. In the dark nights of our souls the radiant moon shines its light upon our path. In daylight, we attempt to move past the present into a new beginning.

This book was written with the hopes of helping you build the framework you can use to come out of the desert and into the abundance of a land filled with joy and sustenance.

Just as the Buddha said that this life is suffering, but there is hope. This suffering can end. It requires us to become the gardener within our soul's garden and bring forth the fruit that lies beneath our pain.

These truths are ancient which are shared in this book. The results have been seen in many spiritual leaders throughout history. It is a path we all must walk down.

A great wise man from India once said, "The decisions you made in the past have placed you where you are today. The decisions you make today will determine your future place."

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## Chapter One

Echoing off the granite floors and walls was the loudest clanking sound I had ever heard. It startled my soul down to the very core. I cringed as I took a gaze around to see about thirty other people inside a holding cell in prison. “How did I ever get myself into this situation,” I pondered quietly to my self. It was like a very surreal dream, which I knew I would not wake from until at least two years and ten months later. That was May 23, 1995 when I was unloaded off the blue prison bus at Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. All my self worth and dignity hung at my feet along with heavy metal chains attached to ankle handcuffs, which wrapped around my waist and chained to another set of handcuffs for my hands. My head spun as if I was on a bad drug trip. I thought back to my adolescence when I had studied magic tricks on our farm in Broken Arrow, OK. I knew no sleight of hand or trick could help me escape what was now facing me.

Several of the other convicts waiting inside the grey dingy paint peeling walls of the holding cell at the notorious Folsom State Prison, I recognized. Several had been in the news lately. One had kidnapped an elderly lady and had stuffed her inside the trunk of his car in which he held her for several days. Another young guy had gunned down a rival gang member, only to have the bullets hit a group of teenagers. There was a buzz going around in the holding tank with some of the African American men who said the famous Rick James was housed here at Folsom. Rick James was a rock and roll icon that had gotten very strung out on drugs and ended up at Folsom. Others talked about another guy who recently was featured on one of those weekly television movies of the week shows. He had kidnapped various college girls and held them captive in a small wooden box, handcuffed and buried about three feet underground. I remember watching that movie and saying that is one person I would not ever want to meet. Yet my actions had created the very nightmare of placing me inside a place where I could come face to face with such a person. To be honest, I looked like an Abbott and Costello movie; I was so out of place from the looks of the other men. But deep down, I knew there was one thing we all shared in

common which allowed me to see their humanness. I, myself along with these other men, had acted in ways that made us lose our freedom. For the most part, we had created our own unreality by choosing to do things we should have known better than to have done.

Now my world was smaller, confined, restricted and my life depended upon whether or not I could navigate myself around this mysterious world of life behind bars. “Who was my cell-mate going to be?” “When would we eat?” “How would I ever survive in the very place I never intended to be?” These questions were bouncing off my inner mind about one hundred miles an hour.

Surrounding me were grown men in green or tan uniforms, all moving around barking orders to the inmate workers. They were loud, rude, and somewhat demeaning. But whom could I blame for being put in such a place? This was my karma. One by one they called our names, took our photos, gave us each an identification card and moved into another holding area. Some one in our small group began to sing the famously known country song by Johnny Cash, Folsom Prison Blues. “I’m stuck in Folsom Prison and time keeps dragging by.” How true those words would become for me during the next two years and ten months.

It was then that a loud bell begun to rattle and reverberate off the granite walls, followed by the sound of a metal rod engaging against rusted, old metal tracks. “CHOW” was heard from a correctional officer and inmates came out of their cells walking right past us. “MMMM fish,” one of the men said, other comments were heard like yelling obscenities and sexual remarks towards those of us in the holding area. It was like a cattle call. I was hungry and could feel my stomach growl, but it did not matter, my mind was soaking in the experience playing out right in front of me. Some of the men cackled as they said, “They won’t last a week till they are someone’s bitch or shanked. Taken out in a pine box.” This made several men walking by laugh. Quietly to myself I said a prayer to God, or anyone listening to help me make through the night. If I do

just that, morning might bring a better understanding of the situation. Right then, someone touched my shoulder and I about jumped out of my skin, those in the holding cell just rolled in laughter. "You gonna make it little man?" a guy asked. I just nodded and looked through the bars holding back tears from falling down my cheek.

It was about then that an officer came and told us to line up. It was just the beginning of many lines I was to follow behind for two years and ten months. In our lovely putrid yellow orange jumpsuits we marched down the grey floor with a red line for us to follow to the dining hall. Once inside, it was unreal. No time to look around, but I was just too nervous to eat. Yet I found my hand shoveling food down, for we were told we had exactly five minutes to eat and that was it. The dining hall in Folsom is in a caged chain link fence surrounding metal tables with four seats. All concrete floors with hard exposed granite walls that were built by inmates some time around 1880. Above us were two officers behind chicken wire on a metal and wood catwalk marching back and forth with rifles slung around their shoulders like an old western movie. Everywhere we walked or went there usually were guards with rifles sneering down at us. An older lifer saw me looking, and said, "You better hide down below the table if that gun is fired. It just keeps bouncing while you pray it does not hit you." Another lifer said, "Watch out for anything on your plate covered in gravy, normally the meat is rancid and you will die if you eat it." Everyone within earshot laughed. It was a kind of laughter that left you wondering. If what was said was true and they were just agreeing or if it was a just a joke to strike fear in you? Either way, I did not eat anything for a while that was covered in gravy.

After chow, if that is what you can call it, we were marched back down to Building Three for what is called Fish Row. Fish is a moniker given any freshly arrived inmate. You are marched and told to stand in front of a cell, two men to each cell. I counted thirty-three cells, five tiers; all with thirty-three cells, behind them is another set of five tiers with thirty-three cells. All grey, dingy, paint chipping and black iron bars running from the floor to the ceiling

of the tier above you. Concrete floors, solid granite walls with hardly more than eight windows per side. All were caked yellow with years of soil and soot that prevented you seeing outside. Only visible area was your own six by ten-foot concrete cell and the granite wall in front of you. Once settled, everyone began yelling out the names of their friends, counties, asking for a shot of coffee or cigarettes. This meshed into a steady stream of loud white noise that was deafening. The tiers were then filled with runner's running back and forth taking newly arrived fish, any thing and everything.

After what seemed to be hours, the lights were turned off. We were told turn in for the night. I lay upon my bunk wondering what tomorrow would bring me. Pondering what decisions I had made that brought me to this hell. Wondering if I would be psychologically scarred from this experience. I just lay on my bunk with a paper-thin mattress with no pillow, looking at the moonlight outside from the cracked windows, realizing that outside is a world so different than the one I had brought myself into. Tomorrow would be the first day of prison life for me. Tomorrow would be another day on this journey that I have reluctantly but yet have to endure. I cried myself silently to sleep, knowing that I had finally reached the bottom. I had no one to blame but myself. I knew I had to find a way to crawl back up. But I was too tired and too overwhelmed to deal with that now. For now, I would sleep behind walls with a man holding a rifle walking outside my tier. In the shadows I see a rat running along the granite wall. I laughed; even that little creature was in prison.

## Chapter Two

For many when they face an unbelievable situation they can find themselves trying to curl up into a fetal position and wish that what they are experiencing a bad dream. When in reality the chaos of reality is the bad dream. Spiritually speaking, we are in reality perfected yet we choose not to honor or welcome this spiritual truth. Instead we live behind the mask of non-reality and think we have to change life to fit to our mental projections.

Gen. 1:26-27: 26 Then God said, “Let us make man<sup>1</sup> in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Within our esoteric traditions from the Martinists<sup>2</sup>, The Martinist doctrine of Pasquales focused around the 'Fall of Man' and its rectification. The Kabbalah's fundamental tenants were:

1. Archetypal Man, or Adam Kadom, was emanated from God, and originally dwelt on a high spiritual plane.
2. Through abuse of his 'free will' Adam Kadom 'fell'.
3. This originally unified being shattered into the many individual souls that now exist.
4. The goal of humanity is to reintegrate itself with the original archetype, thus achieving unity.

The Sumerians were a civilization and historical region in southern **Iraq** (Mesopotamia). It is the earliest known civilization in the world and is known as the Cradle of Civilization. The Sumerian civilization spanned over three-thousand year<sup>3</sup> and began with the first settlement of Eridu in the Ubaid period (mid 6th millennium BC) through the Uruk period (4th millennium BC) and the Dynastic

periods (3rd millennium BC) until the rise of Babylonia in the early 2nd millennium BC.

In historical Babylonia the gods were conceived of in the form of man. Man was created in the image of God because the gods themselves were men. But the conception cannot be traced back further than the age when the Sumerians and Semites came into contact with one another. In pre-Semitic Sumer there are no anthropomorphic gods. We hear, instead, of the *zi* or 'spirit', a word properly signifying 'life' which manifested itself in the power of motion. All things that moved were possessed of life, and there was accordingly a 'life' or 'spirit' of the water as well as of man or beast. .... Sumerian theology, in fact, was still on the level of animism.

Our basic elemental truth of mankind from all religions tracing back to the original Sumerians states man was created in the image of God. Thus it is safe to believe we were created in perfection. Once mankind began to operate out of fear and against the laws of love, mankind fell from grace.

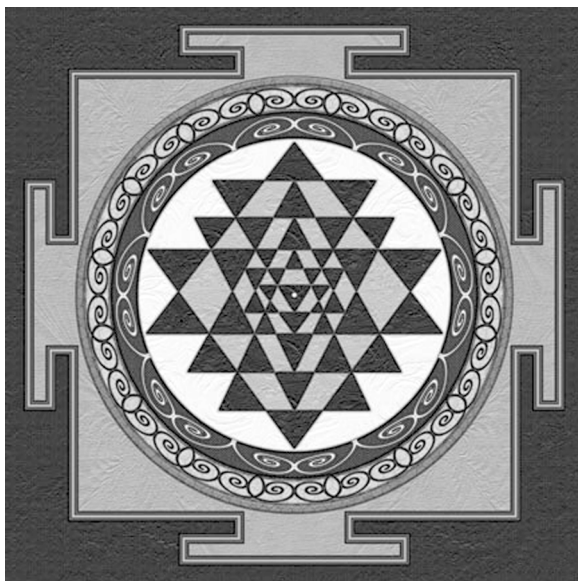
The path to spiritual awakening lies in the truth that one must die to SELF and re-acquire our true essence. Galatians 2:20<sup>4</sup> states, “20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

The same can be said from the Buddhist tradition. **Buddha-nature** (modern pinyin *fó xìng*, literally corresponds to the Sanskrit, *Buddha-dhātu* - "Buddha Element", "Buddha-Principle", but seems to have been used most frequently to translate the Sanskrit *Tathāgata-garbha*, meaning "Buddha Womb", is a doctrine important for many schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddha Nature or Buddha Principle (*Buddha-dhātu*) is taught to be a truly real, but internally hidden immortal potency or element within the purest depths of the mind, present in all sentient beings, for awakening and becoming a Buddha.

We have the ability to return to our true nature, but how? While I was incarcerated at Folsom State Prison, 1994-1997, I began my journey, which led to my awakened state. This book represents

some of the lessons that I learned and which anyone can practice which will help them awaken as well.

We can arrive at the true original state of our nature by facing that we truly are in the present moment, and work towards of our goal of awakening.



## Chapter Three

The mirror is an analogy used in Zen to represent our mind. While I was attending a Zen 7-day silent retreat during Christmas 2007 at Chung Tai Monastery the Dharma Master asked numerous times about what images were in our minds mirror. “Do you see your reflection? If you do you are not practicing Zen. In Zen there is no reflection.” Our mind is overworked occasionally when we are not witnessing the present moment. If we are worrying about our past, or trying to figure out the future, our mind is not in the present moment.

As well when certain emotions arise (anger, depression, loneliness, suicide, etc...) our self-image experiences self-loathing. Those thoughts are not aligned with the spiritual concept of ‘being created in God’s image’. When I first was incarcerated my thoughts were primarily along the lines of how bad I must really be to have done something that placed me in prison. Those repeated attempts to look at how lacking of morals were in my life the more depressed I became. That mirror of my mind was reflecting an ugly image that was very hard for me to look at. However by allowing that image to appear and try not to (in the Zen way) attach any emotions or thoughts too, I was able to see a reflection of who I was at that moment. No judgment simple awareness.

One has to first be able to see the true self as they are at that moment with no judgment just simple awareness of what that image is. By doing this one can then work out an option to change that image. But you won’t know what that image is until you first really look deep within at yourself.

For me much of my early adolescence life appeared in my mirror and I began to see why so much of my moral choices were flawed. While this may not be the norm for others, it is my experience. Hopefully you might be able to identify some of the core elements that might help you.

In my family there was this huge duality issue of being something in public, while masquerading what laid beneath the

mask. From my father to my mother was this illusion of leading a dual life. As well, my other siblings and I were subjected to severe emotional and other abuse. While I am aware that once a person is aware of the abuse and especially after the age of eighteen, one must take personal responsibility of ownership of the emotional health one must take to get healthy. However, as growing up in a very dysfunctional home, I did not have the tools or know how of how to change. So much of my formative years I learned to mask or hide my pain. This duality of life really took over my whole life.

As well, we came from a very influential political family and much occurrences of skirting the law or downright preferential treatment made me see that there could be no repercussions from bad or illegal actions. This is not healthy, as within Buddhism is the concept of Right Action.

During my late teens and early twenties were filled with continued duality in my life expression. I really got lost with this duality and really did not know or understand who the real me was. When one does not understand who they really are, their decision-making is flawed. They tend to do what they think others would want, or they hide behind their mask and can create much harm to others.

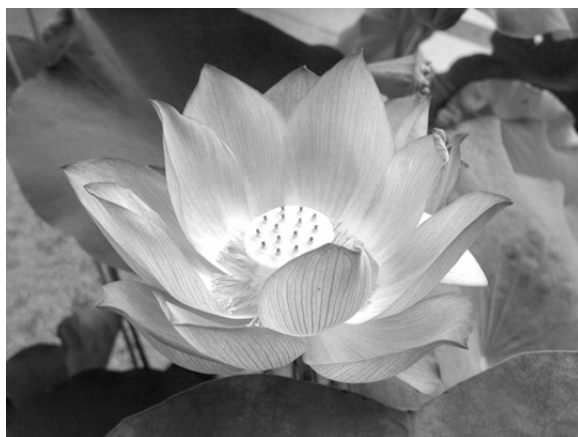
As well, the tendencies of alcohol or drug abuse are rampant when one is not operating from their center of their real self. Of which I did both. My life became this haze of non-reality that was wrapped in an alcohol or drug addiction. Which only made my choices that ever more flawed. It was like a never-ending cycle of abuse.

What become ever aware to me while I was incarcerated was that I would have to develop new moral and ethical guidelines to live by. Most of my life I had tried to live by others or those around standards. Now I had the opportunity to seek out that, which resonated true for me.

Spiritual awakening is a personal path filled with seeking out those things, which we identify with. Each of us is an individual created in the image of God. Each of us has a specific purpose. So if we don't develop into who we truly are, then the whole of

community in which we live does not get the specific uniqueness that we can bring.

We don't have to be like anyone else nor practice the same spiritual disciplines. We can pick and choose freely from the elements in which we study. We can usher in this wholeness that God intended by exercising our freedom to be who we are individually.



## Chapter Four

I was raised as a Southern Baptist. My fraternal side of the family was Baptist and my maternal side was Methodist and Church of Christ. My brother and sister and I would spend our summers at both the Baptist and Church of Christ vacation bible schools. Religion seemed to be the fabric of many of my friend's life growing up in rural Oklahoma. I think for the most part most of us come to our understanding of God by how we are raised.

For any of us, it is important that we test the waters so to speak as it relates to our own intuition. For many of us we continue as we were raised with never studying or seeking out the qualities of our beliefs on our own. We seem very comfortable parroting our family traditions. But we must develop our own faith, hammered out through trial and error and deep spiritual quest.

While in prison I was able to write away to many free publishers of books and newsletters from various faiths. I also checked out what was available to us in our inmate library. This provided me with the elements of learning similar moral and ethical beliefs of many different religions. For the most part they were all the same elements. Which surprised me. For I had been brought up to believe there was only one way to God, and now I found that there were truly many other paths that lead to the same awareness.

Fr. Bede Griffiths, through his spiritual pilgrimage, came to a cosmic vision: universal community capable of embodying universal wisdom and uniting all humanity in one body, one living whole in which "Fullness," the whole of the Godhead dwells. At the center of all religion is the holy place where encounter with the divine takes place.<sup>1</sup>

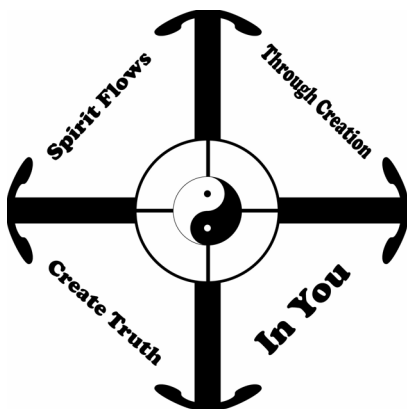
It is true that if one takes their hand and spread out all the fingers, each digit can represent the five major religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Muslim, Christianity, and Judaism). Each one is further way from the others, but when you reach the center of your palm, they all exist together. This is true for all religions. The center core truth is the same, it only gets varied and different when we spread out to the tips.

For me it was a combination of my Native American culture, Eastern Orthodoxy and a mix of Buddhism and Hinduism. Those elements seem to ring true with me. Now I am not saying for you who are reading this to do the same, one must find what truth resonates with them.

I do think there are some basic truths that are shared by many world religions. These qualities are essential for one to embrace to usher in a true spiritual awakening.

I think the Buddha through the Noble Eightfold Path is one of the simplest forms of understanding of what those similar qualities would be. If one practiced living by this standard, you certainly would have the most spiritual qualities exhibited by your morals, ethics and standards.

I do know that there are some in prison who are placed there illegally and wrongfully. However, for the most part, anyone choosing to awaken his or her true spiritual nature has to begin where there are. Prison can be likened to a monastic community; similar cells of living space are similar to the cells that many of the monastic of old use to live in. It is a community where all work together by means of making a living, cooking and eating together and fellowship. No other time than now while you are in prison will you have the free time as you do now to study and learn more about yourself for self-improvement.



## Chapter Five

### The Noble Eightfold Path<sup>1</sup>



- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Right View          | Wisdom             |
| 2. Right Intention     |                    |
| 3. Right Speech        | Ethical Conduct    |
| 4. Right Action        |                    |
| 5. Right Livelihood    |                    |
| 6. Right Effort        | Mental Development |
| 7. Right Mindfulness   |                    |
| 8. Right Concentration |                    |

The Noble Eightfold Path describes the way to the end of suffering, as it was laid out by Siddhartha Gautama. It is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development with the goal of freeing the individual from attachments and delusions; and it finally leads to understanding the truth about all things. Together with the Four Noble Truths it constitutes the gist of Buddhism. Great emphasis is put on the practical aspect, because it is only through practice that one can attain a higher level of existence and finally reach Nirvana. The eight aspects of the path are not to be understood as a sequence of single steps, instead they are highly interdependent principles that have to be seen in relationship with each other.

#### 1. Right View

Right view is the beginning and the end of the path, it simply means to see and to understand things as they really are and

to realize the Four Noble Truth. As such, right view is the cognitive aspect of wisdom. It means to see things through, to grasp the impermanent and imperfect nature of worldly objects and ideas, and to understand the law of karma and karmic conditioning. Right view is not necessarily an intellectual capacity, just as wisdom is not just a matter of intelligence. Instead, right view is attained, sustained, and enhanced through all capacities of mind. It begins with the intuitive insight that all beings are subject to suffering and it ends with complete understanding of the true nature of all things. Since our view of the world forms our thoughts and our actions, right view yields right thoughts and right actions.

## **2. Right Intention**

While right view refers to the cognitive aspect of wisdom, right intention refers to the volitional aspect, i.e. the kind of mental energy that controls our actions. Right intention can be described best as *commitment* to ethical and mental self-improvement. Buddha distinguishes three types of right intentions: 1. the intention of renunciation, which means resistance to the pull of desire, 2. the intention of good will, meaning resistance to feelings of anger and aversion, and 3. the intention of harmlessness, meaning not to think or act cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and to develop compassion.

## **3. Right Speech**

Right speech is the first principle of ethical conduct in the eightfold path. Ethical conduct is viewed as a guideline to *moral discipline*, which supports the other principles of the path. This aspect is not self-sufficient, however, essential, because mental purification can only be achieved through the cultivation of ethical conduct. The importance of speech in the context of Buddhist ethics is obvious: words can break or save lives, make enemies or friends, start war or create peace. Buddha explained right speech as follows: 1. to abstain from false speech, especially not to tell deliberate lies and not to speak deceitfully, 2. to abstain from slanderous speech and not to use words maliciously against others, 3. to abstain from harsh words that offend or hurt others, and 4. to abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth. Positively phrased, this means to tell the truth, to speak friendly, warm, and gently and to talk only when necessary.

#### **4. Right Action**

The second ethical principle, right action, involves the body as natural means of expression, as it refers to deeds that involve bodily actions. Unwholesome actions lead to unsound states of mind, while wholesome actions lead to sound states of mind. Again, the principle is explained in terms of abstinence: right action means 1. to abstain from harming sentient beings, especially to abstain from taking life (including suicide) and doing harm intentionally or delinquently, 2. to abstain from taking what is not given, which includes stealing, robbery, fraud, deceitfulness, and dishonesty, and 3. to abstain from sexual misconduct. Positively formulated, right action means to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others, and to keep sexual relationships harmless to others. Further details regarding the concrete meaning of right action can be found in the Precepts.

#### **5. Right Livelihood**

Right livelihood means that one should earn one's living in a righteous way and that wealth should be gained legally and peacefully. The Buddha mentions four specific activities that harm other beings and that one should avoid for this reason: 1. dealing in weapons, 2. dealing in living beings (including raising animals for slaughter as well as slave trade and prostitution), 3. working in meat production and butchery, and 4. selling intoxicants and poisons, such as alcohol and drugs. Furthermore any other occupation that would violate the principles of right speech and right action should be avoided.

#### **6. Right Effort**

Right effort can be seen as a prerequisite for the other principles of the path. Without effort, which is in itself an act of will, nothing can be achieved, whereas misguided effort distracts the mind from its task, and confusion will be the consequence. Mental energy is the force behind right effort; it can occur in either wholesome or unwholesome states. The same type of energy that fuels desire, envy, aggression, and violence can on the other side fuel self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness. Right effort is detailed in four types of endeavors that rank in ascending order

of perfection: 1. to prevent the arising of unarisen unwholesome states, 2. to abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen, 3. to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and 4. to maintain and perfect wholesome states already arisen.

## **7. Right Mindfulness**

Right mindfulness is the controlled and perfected faculty of cognition. It is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness. Usually, the cognitive process begins with an impression induced by perception, or by a thought, but then it does not stay with the mere impression. Instead, we almost always conceptualize sense impressions and thoughts immediately. We interpret them and set them in relation to other thoughts and experiences, which naturally go beyond the facticity of the original impression. The mind then posits concepts, joins concepts into constructs, and weaves those constructs into complex interpretative schemes. All this happens only half consciously, and as a result we often see things obscured. Right mindfulness is anchored in clear perception and it penetrates impressions without getting carried away. Right mindfulness enables us to be aware of the process of conceptualization in a way that we actively observe and control the way our thoughts go. Buddha accounted for this as the *four foundations of mindfulness*: 1. contemplation of the body, 2. contemplation of feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral), 3. contemplation of the state of mind, and 4. contemplation of the phenomena.

## **8. Right Concentration**

The eighth principle of the path, right concentration, refers to the development of a mental force that occurs in natural consciousness, although at a relatively low level of intensity, namely concentration. Concentration in this context is described as one-pointedness of mind, meaning a state where all mental faculties are unified and directed onto one particular object. Right concentration for the purpose of the eightfold path means *wholesome concentration*, i.e. concentration on wholesome thoughts and actions. The Buddhist method of choice to develop right concentration is through the practice of meditation. The meditating mind focuses on a selected object. It first directs itself onto it, then sustains concentration, and finally intensifies concentration step by step.

Through this practice it becomes natural to apply elevated levels of concentration also in everyday situations.



## Chapter Six

It is our responsibility while in prison to use this opportunity for us to change and grow into a more spiritual person. Thus when we are released we are a step ahead in making sure our parole is successful.

If we don't we tend to cycle through this loop of harming others or ourselves and more than likely ending back up in prison. To stop this cycle, one must awaken to their true nature. Many of us who use to live inside prison are now awake and outside enjoying a life full of love and positive opportunities. This is no secret how we were able to accomplish this. Simply we used our time to better our own understanding our true spiritual nature and awoke.

There are many free newsletters and books and magazines offered by various sundry of religious and spiritual publishers. Just ask around many of these are available from friends of ours on the yard. Of course too, at the end of this book is a listing of some of the top places you can get such materials.

Using your time in a positive self learning manner will open yourself up to the opportunity to radically change your life.

The old self is in the past, the new self is here in this very present moment, which is yours for the awakening. Just choose to spend time to get to know the real you. It takes discipline and study and many hours in contemplation.

Spending time to look at our internal mirror, embracing the person we are today, and seeing the opportunity for change is our beginning. It is not easy, but true growth comes with challenges to embrace. If we meet this challenge, we truly can become our true spiritual self.

Many others who were in prison used their time to change. They paroled into a life full of hope, love and spiritual awareness. You too can have this great life by using your time wisely.

## Chapter Seven

From the very beginning of the bible God shows us how he has used persons with a violent or sinful past to be his instruments of peace. Far too often the mainstream church has left the real persons in need in a sea of rejection. It is almost as if the “Christians” of these churches are wearing blinders towards the world they live in.

Genesis 4 tells us about the murder of Abel from his brothers, Cain, action. Under the old law an eye for an eye mentality existed, and unfortunately oh so true in today’s religious rights underlying messages. But we read on to see in Genesis 8:15, 16 that God would not allow Cain’s punishment to be death. Rather he was banished to another land. Here we see that God’s action is one of redemption for one who has sinned.

Genesis 19:30-36 is an episodic view of incest and abuse. Lot’s two daughters got him drunk and had sex with him, so they could preserve their family lineage. No where in this story does it speak of God’s wrath or swift judgment.

Not to be sarcastic, but that story of Lot’s daughters reminds me of our present day societies overzealous consumption in reality television shows. Many of these shows reflect the perverse nature in our society. We as esoteric can call this the lower nature of man. While on the other hand those who are seen as partakers in these shows elicit an aloof roll from our eyes, instead of an opportunity to exhibit to others God’s mercy and redemption.

Genesis 27 exhibits for us the conspiracy of fraud and stealing in the actions of Jacob and his mother. They both plotted to steal the birthright and blessings of the first son by tricking Esau. Yet God saw that Jacob would later play a pivotal role in showing God’s mercy to his creations through Jacob’s serving God.

Genesis 37 even speaks of an ever-growing problem facing our society today. Joseph's family sold him into slavery. How many times have we seen or heard of persons in our own country buying and selling of human beings for the economic growth of others. Slavery is still an issue in our world today in many different ways. Yet again God used his instrument as a servant by Joseph to exhibit the more heavenly ways of God. Especially how God meets the needs of those who call out to him.

Exodus 2:11-15 speaks to us on how Moses killed an Egyptian and then fled, ran from the retribution that Pharaoh wanted. Yet Moses comes back to be the instrument of deliverance for God's chosen people exhibiting how God's mercy was granted to Moses.

2 Samuel 11 speaks to the adulterous and murderous actions of David. 2 Samuel 12 shows us how God used Nathan to rebuke David in his actions against the basic message God gave his own children. Yet once David became aware of his actions against the laws of God, he accepted God's mercy and became the instrument of peace God had intended.

John 18:10 shows Simon Peter, in the garden, the night the soldiers came for Jesus, became violent to the extent of using his sword to cut an ear off of one of the soldiers. Yet the very foundation of church was built on Peter, his actions again were again forgiven by the mercy of God. John 18:11 Jesus commands Peter to put away his sword. I think it is time that our churches put away the sword of indifference and become the instrument of mercy in our community.

Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus explains the parable of the sheep and goats. The sheep actively partook in the ministry of social justice while the goats did nothing. It is the sheep that God wants and not goats.

I think many times throughout the rich history in the bible we see how God has used torn, tattered and sinful persons to experience his divine love and mercy to change. They have become a living example of God's mercy. Once they have recognized this, they have become mighty persons within the framework in the role God intended for his creations. His children are to be the instruments in society to reflect the divine peace God offers.

Many times in our own present day lives when someone; family, friends, acquaintances, or even people in our community, have exhibited signs of adulterous, murderous, fraudulent actions; we are too quick in judging them. In some ways we strive to banish them from our sight. While I am not saying we should forgive and forget, as we see from Jesus, we are to honor the laws of the land. But to simply rid from our awareness these persons, we should seek ways to positively minister to them. They should have the same opportunity for spiritual awareness that our saints and church history has seen in the bible. We need to show them God's mercy. After all, where would we be in our church history if we simply denied Peter, Moses, David, etc... because of their previous unenlightened actions? Even in James 2:1 it says that we must not be prejudice. We can't simply favor some people over others. Furthermore verses 2-9 James gives us a parable to live by as Christians changed by the mysteries of Christ. <sup>2</sup>"For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; <sup>3</sup>And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: <sup>4</sup>Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? <sup>5</sup>Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? <sup>6</sup>But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? <sup>7</sup>Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? <sup>8</sup>If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thyself, ye do well: <sup>9</sup>But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

God is neither about shunning nor evicting one of their birthright. You may ask what birthright I am speaking of. Are we not created in the image of God? Are we not all physical manifestations of the creative spark from God? Then if we throw away a person because of their actions without attempting to reach out to them with the redemptive power of God, then we are denying them of their birthright as one of God’s children. When a Buddhist monk greets another person, they typically bow with their hands in a praying state and say “Namaste”. Which translates to “The God within me recognizes the God within you.” This is a wonderful translation as to how we should greet every human being.

As a whole, without the social justice platform alive in our churches or as an individual members agenda, then we are denying our world of their birthright. Many scriptures tell us not to judge others, let God and the Angels do that, and let us become the instrument of peace for our world. We who are esoteric believers work towards our own enlightenment of the Christ nature in our life. We need to also recognize that same capacity for spiritual realization in others. That is our role to use our growth and understanding in the mercy of Christ. Our life and actions should reflect compassion and mercy to those in need of justice.

One issue comes up a lot within those who actively serve in social justice capacities. The compassion to look at those who are dirty, sinful, not able to take care of themselves, is not to judge them. Judging those who are hurting does not help the person nor does it reflect the love the Jesus asked us to become.

Matt. 13:47-52 frees us from having to judge, as that is the role for the Angels. <sup>49</sup>“So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.” We are free to just show God’s mercy and love to those in need.

Our role is to equip those in need with the tools and resources they need. Matt. 15:17-20 “<sup>18</sup>But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Mark 7:15 “<sup>15</sup>There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.”

2 Cor. 2:5-11 asks us to forgive others. It goes on to say in verses 5-10 to forgive and love. In verse 7 it says, “<sup>7</sup>So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” I think this example of someone in the Church who hurt the faith, was told to be forgiven. So as that person not to become discouraged and find their way back to Christ. That is our role when we minister is to encourage and help those back into the reality of the Christ message.

Gal. 6:1, 2, 10 also says to do good to all. “<sup>1</sup>Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. <sup>10</sup>As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Even though that verse ends with us to look at our own Christian brothers and sisters, let us not forget that before that line is says to do good to everyone. Everyone is the message.

As well another great lesson to learn in ministering to others in social justice is not to hurt their re-entry back into the church. 2 Cor. 2:5-11 is a good verse. 2 Timothy 2:23-26 and James 2:12-13 speaks as to not speaking ill of others. As well James 4:11-12 speaks in the same manner. 1 Peter 2-3 asks us to stop our malicious and deceitful and backstabbing ways. We can't afford to speak ill of those trying to grow in the knowledge of Christ. Their past is their past, not ours to speak about to others. We must show

some compassion and confidentiality when we minister to those in needs. As well Gal. 5:15 helps us to understand that harsh criticism can destroy rather than help.

In relation to forgiveness we should look up Matt. 6:14-15; Matt. 18:21-35; Col. 3:13.

I think our prayer can be summed up in I Cor. 14:12 as it says...“Since you are so eager to have spiritual gifts, ask God for those what will be of real help to the whole church.” Our basic theme should become part of the Body of Christ so our visible action helps the mission of the Church.

In the past we had all those great speakers of social justice, from our own saints and church leaders to modern day persons like Martin Luther King, Gandhi and others. But who is speaking up today? Who is moving society to social justice awareness? Is that not our role as Christians? If we begin to share with others what Christ has made known to us, then we begin to see changes around us. Let us become those instruments of peace that God had intended and showed us through his word and sacraments.

Presently we see many states legislating the role of faith-based programs to help those in need. Recently we have seen the states begin to look at faith-based communities to help prisoners learn to positively reenter society. It has even been asked of these communities to reach into their own local area to meet the basic needs of others. Ranging from medical clinics for those without insurance, to providing educational tutoring or even mentoring for those re-entering the workforce. Some churches even help those facing bankruptcy in finding the appropriate way to budget their money. The role of the church is to find creative ways to help improve all the lives of those within the surrounding of the church buildings. After all how are those we minister too going to see the true essence of God’s mercy if we don’t first take action? It is not our words that change people, but rather our action in meeting their most basic needs. As we become the instrument of God’s social

justice. This is part of the way our esoteric churches can be seen as an instrument of God when we apply social justice programs to reach out into our own respective communities.

The Buddhist tradition has a person whom many identify with because he too awoke while serving his time in prison. Milarepa was born in the village of Kya Ngatsa - also known as Tsa - in Gunghang province of western Tibet to a prosperous family he was named **Mila Thöpag**a (Thos-pa-dga'), which means "A joy to hear." The name of his clan was Khyungpo, his family name was Josay. When his father died, Milarepa's uncle and aunt took all of the family's wealth. At his mother's request, Milarepa left home and studied sorcery. While his aunt and uncle were having a party to celebrate the impending marriage of their son, he took his revenge by summoning a giant hail storm to demolish their house, killing 35 people, although the uncle and aunt are supposed to have survived. The villagers were angry and set off to look for Milarepa, but his mother got word to him and he sent a hailstorm to destroy their crops.

Many of Milarepa's deeds took place in Chokyi Dronma's homeland and his life and songs were compiled by Tsangnyon Heruka, sponsored by Chokyi Dronma's brother, the Gunghang king Thri Namgyal De.

Milarepa later lamented his evil ways in his older years: "In my youth I committed black deeds. In maturity I practiced innocence. Now, released from both good and evil, I have destroyed the root of karmic action and shall have no reason for action in the future. To say more than this would only cause weeping and laughter. What good would it do to tell you? I am an old man. Leave me in peace."<sup>1</sup>

We should remember the stories of many different religions. For they show that we who may have done some very evil deeds can and will in our lifetime awaken to our true spiritual nature.

## Chapter Eight

While in Sacramento County Jail, my family sent me many books to occupy my more than ample free time. Also a dear friend, Michael G., a few months before I was arrested began to teach me the practice of meditation. I now had the time to sit. I remember he sent me a book while in jail. I had begun to read it with him prior to me being in jail. A Buddhist writer named Ashvagosha, around the third century, wrote the book “Awakening of Faith”. He had also given me many of the Carlos Castaneda books about Don Juan, which we read together. We would then discuss them outside upon his porch in Sacramento until the wee hours of the morning. Prior to my arrest, I was living in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains upon ancient sacred land owned by a Christian Esoteric community. I was living much like modern day monastics. The books and reading my friend Michael G. had shared with me became very useful to me while sitting inside jail. I can’t think but that this was just happenstance of our crossing paths. He was really a mystic who helped me transform myself. I learned a lot through our dialogues while I was in jail. I owe a lot of debt to this man and to his friend Kent, along with Fred who allowed me to stay with upon that magic mountain in the Sierra Foothills.

Living on that secluded mountaintop prior to my incarceration in Sacramento County Jail, really in a way prepared me for living inside jail and ultimately prison. Michael G. used to remind me that the shading of the drama in front of me (jail cell) is no different than if I were outside. I had to deal with my own shit, transmute it, process it, contemplate it, and gain wisdom from it. Now I had more time than many others (in the free world) so why not take the opportunity to learn. Michael G. made me see that instead of looking at incarceration as a bad thing, I could view it as a positive. How I lived with my experience was up to me. I could either make it worthwhile, or I could fret it away. I could learn to see the mystical present moment or just stay the same. While I was not yet ready to admit my actions had placed me behind bars, I was beginning to see this as an opportunity the universe was giving me.

My family paid for subscriptions to magazines such as Shambala Sun, and I wrote away for other Buddhist and Christian literature. One book that stands out very much to me is one that was sent in by the L. Ron Hubbard group, Criminon. It was called “The Way to Happiness”. Basically it taught simple character and moral conduct. It was like a light bulb went off inside my head while I was reading this booklet. I had begun to see how so much of my life before jail was filled with immoral and unloving actions or thoughts. So much of my previous life was mirrored by how I thought my father was. I came from a family that was somewhat privileged on the political side of things. Most of my life I had been shown to be someone other than what you projected out to others. And if you did not do anything too bad, one could use special favors from those in power to get out of almost anything. I was so good at analyzing anything and convincingly debating my way out of any infraction. I had lost my self-identity. Not just me, but my real SELF, my soul. I did not see black and white; everything was gray. It could be debated either way for one’s advantage. So basic common humane character traits or morals were not something I was conscious that I had. There was no need for that, for I was like Teflon. Power can be corrupting at times. As the saying goes, Absolute power corrupts absolutely. So this free book taught me ways to build a spiritual and moral foundation for myself.

From the books I was reading I began to come alive inwardly. It was like a small fire growing inside my soul as I become aware of these ancient spiritual truths. I saw past the fabric of religions and begin to see the deeper hidden true meanings in what spiritual writers were saying. I wanted the truth, not religion. Not someone else’s interpretation but my own full understanding of the spiritual truth. Many of the bible thumpers were only expressing their lack of knowledge, but what came forth was they thought I was dealing with the devil with my studies of meditation and other spiritual paths. In actuality I was finding common threads of the same messages being said from many religions. So obviously this universal truth had to be important. In Psalms 46:10 it states, “Be still, and know that I am God”. Psalms 119:15 says, “I will meditate

in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways”. But one verse that stood out the most was Proverbs 8:7 “My mouth shall meditate truth, and my lips shall hate wickedness”. So meditation was in the Bible.

As this verse stood out the most to me. I began to see how my mind and mouth (what I chose to speak about) were not good things but was rather unloving. I begun to read about and practice meditation. I was contemplating these new character building truths and moral values. I was getting mail from Orthodox Catholic, Roman Catholic, Zen, Buddhism, Bhai’ and other free newsletters with spiritual writings. I didn’t care where it came from, so long as it made sense. My mind and heart begun to soften and I was gaining the ability to hold a mirror to my soul and see what was hidden. I was facing my demons I had hidden long ago.

One book, which pushed me over the edge on accepting my faults, was Chogram Trumpa’s “Meditation in Action.” This book really made sense to me; it was if it was written for just what I was going through at that time. In the book it talks about healing, and reaching deep within and dealing with the ugliness that prevents one from having a wide-open space for true spirituality. I was finally ready to look within my soul.

I was celled at this time in a single cell. I chose to lock myself in so to speak. I did not eat, nor socialize or go out into the day room in the pod for recreation for three days. I stayed in my cell. I used this time to review all the facts of my hurts, disappointments, let downs, and pain. I went back to my earliest recollection. I reached deep into the cobwebs of my mind. From four years of age and up till my present age of thirty-two.

I was learning how these past hurts and pain and allowing them to stay in our memory keep us from experiencing true freedom in our spiritual development. By hanging on to these memories and allowing them to fester, become like a cancer growing upon our soul. It gives us reason to be angry. It gives us

the reason to treat others unloving. It gives us permission allow our speech to become mean and nasty. The pain we never allowed to heal, becomes the dysfunction that permits our actions to be harmful for others. Until one is able to heal those memories, they keep us in a cycle of fear, hurt and hell. Some of our actions are unconscious to us. Other times it has become so familiar to us that we are truly blind to seeing our actions inflict more pain onto others. To finally begin ridding our selves of these memories and the attachment they hold within our mind and heart, will eventually give more space for true divine spiritual love.

When I emerged from my three days of gut wrenching replaying of those memories I had been holding onto I felt refreshed. I felt the water falling down upon me in the shower as if all my pains and hurts were also being washed clean. Those three days were full of emotional crying that just leaves you wrenching and your stomach cramping. I wanted to quit many times. I was either going to die in my cell working to become free once and for all, or I would emerge anew. That was my determination. I struggled to give voice or explain to another person what I had been through. How I now felt cleansed by this new spiritual experience. I was unable to find the words to explain it. It transcended all known adjectives of description, it was truly transcending.

I was in a new state of mind. However it would be years later that I could reflect on this as just the mere beginning of my spiritual journey. The weekend was here and I wanted to get caught up with the news, televisions shows and just relax with the guys. I had been absent from all of these for three days. Monday was a court date. Unbeknownst to me, it would prove to be just another of many hills for me to climb.

## Chapter Nine

Monday was one of many preliminary hearings as this was the normal routine for past six months. You get an early rise, breakfast and to be then transferred down to a holding cell in the basement. This is next to the courts to wait till I met with my attorney. You would be down there for a minimum of four hours or as long as eight hours in a ten foot by ten foot holding cell with anywhere from five to fifteen other inmates from our pods. We had nothing to read, nothing to do, no television, no radio, just us sitting and waiting in idleness.

When my attorney finally arrived, I was told that today the District Attorney would be presenting his final preliminary findings. He would also request a determined prison sentence. I had already known that I would more than likely be accepting a plea bargain, as I knew I was guilty. The news from my attorney immediately charged my anger and I exploded. "What do you mean all you could get from him was a thirty years sentence. That is not a plea deal but is a bribe with the devil. Hell no! That I won't sign up for," was what I shouted to my attorney through a solid glass window with just a few holes drilled in so we could communicate. He told me this was just the first of many offers that would be coming. It's like a legal game, which can takes months or even years to finally get what is acceptable. I had no clue; this was my first brush with the law to this extent. We went to court, listened to the findings from the DA, and then I was put back into the holding tank to wait again to be taken up to my cell. My attorney came back to talk to me, and explained now it was his turn to investigate and present his preliminary findings to the DA and courts. This would take at least three months maybe more.

Riding high from my previous weekend's spiritual renewal I was crushed and thinking how I could ever deal with thirty years behind bars in a prison. It was as if my life did not matter, my dreams, my existence and chance to prove what my life could become did not matter. I was again depressed, even at times

wishing I would just die. I was losing my will to live. I was not suicidal I just did not want to live any more if it meant for me to be away from those I love, my dreams, aspirations for thirty plus years. Again came thoughts of *“how did I ever get to this point?”* that I could hurt another person in grossly criminal way that my sentence could be thirty-six years.

Back in my cell, I cried, wept tears of fear, loathing and self-depreciating. I did not even want to make my weekly calls to my parents or sister or friend Michael G. What I did not know was how much love and support my family were really giving me. It was out of my sight in many ways. My attorney came to visit me a few days later stating that my father was concerned that I had not called him after my Monday court date. My dad respected my dealing with the news but wanted to talk to me. And he had been calling my attorney about every day at least twice a day since he found out that I was in jail. I was shocked. I was also hurt that my actions had caused this pain to be visited upon my family. With that thought came another spiritual breakthrough.

My actions caused great pain and hurt to another human being and their family. That hit my gut like a sack of potatoes being swung into my stomach. My actions, my words, my thoughts had caused another great suffering. I had not even thought of my victim in such a manner. This pain I felt fueled my fire to grow spiritually so I could know I would never hurt another soul again. So many repercussions are there from such unloving actions, not to mention the legal repercussions. When we inflict suffering onto another not only do they suffer, but we suffer too. You reap what you sow. That is called karma. Man, did I ever screw up to the max this time. And the repercussions may just take away my life for the duration of my adult years. And on that note, my actions may cause another (my victim) severe pain and suffering for years to come. How did I ever get so low in my decision-making process to where my actions were unloving to a creation of God? This thought I sat with for many years to come and still to this day I am reminded how my actions have immediate results upon others. My actions are either loving and a positive thing, or they are unloving and cause much suffering

for others including myself. There is enough pain in this world, and I wanted to start making decisions that brought forth love and peace and not suffering.

I broke down and called my father that night. He was almost in tears, not because of the court hearing, but that I was not calling him as often as I could. He reassured me we would as a family work our way through this. But what was important is that I remain in contact with my family. They wanted to give me love, support and help me stay focused. Even though my actions that placed me in jail were unloving, my family struggled to make it loud and clear to me that I was loved. They wanted to be there even though they were thousands of miles away from California. My family back home in Oklahoma was rallying to make sure I had the best support they could offer. They wanted me to call often as I could so they could keep my mind focus on change, to focus on happy thoughts...and would worry when I became silent. It is hard with out the emotional support for someone in prison or jail to take on the task of changing. Support is essential.

Time to regroup and get my mind focused. If I were training for a fight I would be working out every day. For me to be of any help to my legal counsel, then I had best begin my spiritual training. For after all, I could not go back in time and fix my bad actions. All I could do now was to move forward. To do this in such a way that would benefit others and myself. I knew I would have to answer to the courts for my bad behavior, and I would have to ultimately accept the best offer I could get. But crying, and worrying, or spending my time in anger would not help anyone. It would not serve me well in preparing for the transformation I so wanted and desired in my heart. Time to become a warrior.

My friend Michael G. had sent me in a small book of the “Way of Chung Tzu”. I took to heart all those conversations reflecting on the life lessons in the Don Juan books. I had some of the preliminary tools in my possession to become a warrior, but I had to discipline myself with my spiritual training.

I begun to wake early in the morning, eat my breakfast and then get back into my cell for some reading. I tried to keep a journal and reviewing the lessons I was learning. I would read, take notes, and then write about what I had read in my journal. I was soaking in everything I was learning and making sure I kept a daily review. I wanted to commit what I was learning to memory.

One of my readings led me to the Buddha's Eight Fold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path explains a way to end suffering, as Siddhartha Gautama taught. It is a practical guideline to ethical and mental development. It's goal is to free the individual from attachments and delusions. It finally leads to understanding the truth about all things. Together with the Four Noble Truths it constitutes the elements of Buddhism. Much emphasis is put on the practical aspect, because it is only through practice that one can attain a higher level of existence. The eight aspects of the path are not to be understood as a sequence of single steps, instead they are highly interdependent principles that have to be seen in relationship with each other. They are symbiotically intertwined with each other.

The Four Noble Truths are that, (1) Life means suffering, (2) The origin of suffering is attachment, (3) The cessation of suffering is attainable, (4) There is a path of ending suffering. The Noble Eightfold Path states that, (1) Right Understanding, (2) Right Intention, (3) Right Speech, (4) Right Action, (5) Right Livelihood, (6) Right Effort, (7) Right Mindfulness, and (8) Right Concentration.

These two elements are part of the foundation of Buddhism; it also mirrors the esoteric teachings of Christ. Christ came to free the captives, to heal the sick. It is by exercising spiritual practices and changing our mindset that allow us to evolve into a transformed person. Sometimes hearing things from a fresh source (Buddhism) allows one of faith (Christian) to fully understand what hidden meanings Jesus talked about. Whatever your faith may be, Buddhist readings help you understand and apply your faith more meaningfully.

## Chapter Ten

Towards the end of my term in 1997 I had several opportunities to join in several workshops through the pre-parole classes. One of them was Siddha Yoga, which also practices meditation and hatha yoga as their main practice. Also I joined in a three-day workshop facilitated by the Quakers with “Alternative to Violence” (AVP) workshops. AVP was only once, but Siddha Yoga had monthly workshops that were quite inspirational. One of the programs with Siddha Yoga is a free monthly study course that really helps one awake to their true spiritual nature. This really helped me on so many different levels.

Siddha Yoga correspondence course is a set of writings that are mailed to you once a month. In the lessons are many opportunities to be aware of how silently and magically spirit exists. It helps instill in us the practice of living in the present moment. It helps too in that the lessons open one’s heart to the teachings of truth that are ancient. It also respects whatever faith or religion you have and even instructs you not to give that up. It really helps strengthen your own personal spiritual beliefs. The course is free to prisoners and I would highly recommend you subscribe to it.

At Folsom there were several who were receiving the course, and to my surprise some actual workshop leaders from the Oakland, CA Ashram were coming to Folsom to participate. It was only open for those in pre-parole, but since I was part of the Contemplative Fellowship and subscribed to the Siddha Yoga course, I was ducated to attend. For those not familiar with ducats, they are slips of paper given to inmates to attend different things, even your medical appointments. Without them, you are denied access. It is like the hall passes in junior high school.

Three guys from Oakland, including Murli, the CA coordinator for Siddha Yoga prison project was there. They all were so full of love and accepting of the men in the class. We had about fifteen to twenty men in for a full day, 9am to 3:30pm class. We

began our chant with Nag Champa incense burning. What a treat to have such divine smells permeate our classroom. We began to chant Om Nama Shivaya over and over to a CD with Gurumayi, the lineage person of Siddha Yoga. After the chant, we watched a video message from Gurumayi. In the talk she wove the stories from Christian, Hindu, and Buddhism to show how divine love is available to all of us. In the message were beautiful illustrations that made your heart sing for joy. It was divine; it was something I had never felt before. After the video message, we did a twenty-minute sit. After that it was our lunchtime, and each of the instructors made themselves available so we could talk with them. They gave each inmate equal time, and each talk was so filled with life and love. It was almost as if we were co-equals and not free person to inmate status in talking. It was so liberating.

After lunch we watched another video with John Friend detailing the practice of Hatha Yoga. The video showed different movements and positions that would help us sit for longer periods of time for meditation. All the inmates had brought their state issued blankets to sit on and were using them to do the movements. After the video we sat again for twenty minutes. Sometimes after the yoga exercises we would watch another message/teaching from Gurumayi or a chanting video where we would sit as we would in meditation.

These workshops were every month right up until I paroled in October 1997. They were useful in that it gave me another teaching method on meditation. It also helped strengthen my practice already in place. The energy and amount of love this practice created in me only proved that these techniques, the ancient form of chanting and meditation is all part of any transformation. I looked back at where I was when I first arrived, and knew that once I was released I had a better chance for success. I had changed, my heart had changed, my thinking had changed, and I was truly a changed person, inside and out.

Another program I was allowed to attend was the Alternative to Violence (AVP) workshop facilitated by the Quakers. AVP helps empower people to lead nonviolent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, cooperation, and trust.

Founded in and developed from the real life experiences of prisoners and others, and building on a spiritual base, AVP encourages every person's innate power to positively transform themselves and the world.

AVP/USA is an association of community-based groups and prison based groups offering experiential workshops in personal growth and creative conflict management. The national organization provides support for the work of these local groups. The AVP program began in 1975 when a group of inmates at Green Haven Prison (NY) was working with youth coming into conflict with the law (yes--gangs existed even then). They collaborated with the Quaker Project on Community Conflict, devising a prison workshop. The success of this workshop quickly generated requests for more, and AVP was born. The program quickly spread to many other prisons.

Our workshop happened to coincide with a riot inside Folsom with two African American groups. Several of our participants were at the workshop when the riot went down. Due to their race, they had to leave the program that again was a three-day workshop. What really amazed me was how pro-active our facilitators were with the officers. They spoke up and said, clearly now more so than ever, is a great time for these guys to learn from the workshop and take the lessons they will have learned back to their friends. Long story short, those two African American men were allowed to stay and finished the three-day workshop. That alone was miraculous to see how the administration bended the rules for a positive program.

Within the three days were skits, crafts, dialoging, and real life scenarios where we would comment, act out, or draw how we could relate to the situation without violence. We listened to stories of previous workshop attendee's essays, and we discussed how we could all respond in other ways to situations rather than with violence. The combination of all inmates participation and being

saturated with this philosophy for three days helped to sink in the knowledge we were learning.

For so much of my life, and for those attending this workshop, violence was a central theme of our life. We responded to situations with angry knee-jerk response instead of thinking of another solution. We also learned about setting boundaries.

For the most part when people treat us with respect to our boundaries, there is no anger or outbursts. It is when those boundaries are crossed we feel threatened. In the class we learn to set healthy boundaries, and we would role-play how we would respond when others cross those boundaries. It gives us a chance to learn new coping skills so we don't resort to violence in our actions or speech.

We learn that we do have a choice on how we react and respond to others. This course taught how to make sure our actions do not lead to more violence. We learned to stay in control of our own actions. As a country boy it reminded me of an old country saying, "Does the tail wag the dog, or does the dog wag the tail?"

Giving violent responses to violence only keeps the negative violent energy active. To respond in a non-violent manner but with assertion neutralizes this energy.

We have a choice to be violent or not. The more skills we learn to act in a non-violent manner, the safer our surroundings will become. Both inside and outside of prison. AVP is a great tool in helping prisoners learn non-violent skills.



## Chapter Eleven

Upon paroling several unique things happened which should be shared. In some ways it is reaffirming the paths I took to heart in prison helped create the reality I am living on the outside.

I remember reading once, from the Siddha Yoga course, Baba Muktananda said this, “You are where you are today, this very moment, because of decisions you made in the past. Your future is now determined with the actions you choose today.” This is a very powerful truth which helps one keep their mind focused on right actions and right speech.

Once I got out, a few years passed and I found myself writing to about seventy prisoners. Many of them at Folsom who were with me during the early months of the Contemplative Fellowship. I also began to see that for many, I was saying the same things, in seventy letters at a time. So I decided to create a newsletter. I called it, “Dharma Seeds”. It was filled with writings from Fr. Thomas Keating, and others who gave me permission to re-print their spiritual writings. I wrote one article for each issue, but the primary writers were the masters behind contemplative lifestyles.

In time, I was able to get a list of prisoners across the USA, and began to send them the quarterly newsletter. Before I knew it, I had over two thousand subscribers. This grew beyond my expectations. So my sister and a dear friend of mine, Janice, created a non-profit, Dharma Seeds Foundation. We made sure to incorporate with the wording that all one hundred percent of the funds donated went to pay for the costs of publishing the paper and the mailing costs. Volunteers do all the other tasks. Dharma Seeds has no paid staff, it is lovingly provided for with volunteers. We still produce Dharma Seeds, and any prisoner can get a free subscription.

Also another unique thing that was rather miraculous happened during the tornado season in Oklahoma. A group of Siddha Yoga members in Oklahoma City went to Norman to help prepare for a nationwide mailing for Siddha Yoga. The mailing was for a retreat in June at the ashram in South Fallsburg, NY. While

there, there was a tornado that touched down in the very vicinity as my apartment complex I was living in at that time. Several of us stayed over in Norman, and drove back that Sunday morning. When I got to my street, it looked as if it was a military destruction scene. Trees, debris, parts of the buildings were in the street. You simply could not even drive down the street. Luckily for me my part of the apartment complex had escaped any tornado damage.

I went to work, for then I was working Sunday through Tuesday from 2pm till 2am with a publishing company as a graphic artist. While at work, I listened to country music and the station I was listening mentioned they would try and give away nine-hundred dollars on Monday morning. I looked at the picture I had on my desk of Gurumayi, and said, "Okay, I want to meet you in person, so help me to win that nine-hundred dollars." With nothing more to think about, I went back to work and continued creating advertising display ads until 2am.

When you work such weird and awkward hours your whole routine changes. I stayed up till 4am unwinding from my day at work and blessing from being spared tornado damages. I did set my alarm for seven am so I could see if I had won the money. When the alarm went off, I was so tired from only three hours of sleep; I simply hit the snooze button. Five minutes later, I awoke, and said, "Crap, I missed the number." I wrestled in my mind whether or not to call the radio station or turn over and get back to sleep. I chose to turn over and go back to sleep. But something was gnawing at me inside my stomach, so I rolled over and called the radio station. To my surprise, I did win, and I just waited till the last thirty seconds to call in to qualify. I was so excited. I used the money to go to the June retreat at the Ashram.

When I went to the ashram for a four-day retreat, with a few days of rest, I was so ecstatic to be there. All I had seen of Siddha Yoga was from the videos I saw in prison. Now I was actually there, in flesh and blood. There was no way I could have afforded this trip except by winning the money.

For days we sat in same hall as seen in many of the videos we watched in prison. I was within inches from Gurumayi, and to my surprise sitting next to me was John Friend, who had taught us via video how to do Hatha Yoga. I was running on pure bliss by

this time. The last night while at the final chanting session, Gurumayi passed me, and I had thought I was suppose to have met her while there. Before I could think, out of my gut, rose these words, “Gurumayi!” I was shocked, why did I do this, I knew better, this was rude, I felt so alone. All those thoughts whisked through my mind at a hundred miles an hour. Without acting as if anything out of the ordinary, Gurumayi turned and walked back towards me. I told her I had been in prison, and that Murli and others had came to us to teach us to meditate and chant. I gave her my mantra beads I had made in prison and she reached out to take them from me. But what she did was wrap her hands around me, and blessed me as she took the beads. I felt a spark of electricity enter my body, and it was as if time stood still for a very long time. When I came back to the present moment, Gurumayi had walked away and out the building. Those around me came to tell me what an extraordinary experience this was. For over twenty years, many had been coming to the Ashram, and no one had seen a spiritual master, a living Guru, turn and walk back on the path she/he had walked. And it is not protocol to yell out the Guru’s name. I told them; it came from my gut, not a premeditated decision. They knew that, for how it all unfolded was a miracle for them. Many of them thanked me for allowing this miracle to happen in front of them.

For me, it meant so much, to connect on the outside with someone and to an organization that reached out to me while inside prison. They all treated me as a fellow human and not as an ex-felon. This was truly a miracle retreat and many of the events to this day, some almost ten years later, are as vivid now in my mind as when it happened.

Many in prison told me that if you had been to prison opportunities would cease to exist for anyone once they paroled. This was not my experience. Time and time again, God has reached out to me, and showed me that I truly am a changed person. That I am truly loved, and all the abundance He offers is mine. I am free of my past. All I have now are moment-to-moment experiences of divine love each and every minute.

All I have witnessed and seen in my life since my parole is a confirmation that God is alive. That his Spirit is alive within me and that I have so much love to offer to all. Not every day is a great day,

I still have bumps in the road, but how I relate to those moments are determined by how I choose to allow my meditation practices to come alive in that moment. It truly is transforming.

It is true that there are some in this world that will hold you to your past as they judge you. For me, I don't care. I know, again, I KNOW, who I am today. I don't have to prove it to anyone, my actions and my life today is my testimony to my change. Many choose to see me as I am today, and don't care about my past. Those are my friends and those are the persons I choose to be around. The ones who want to stay focused on my past just tells me that those persons are not my friends. I move on.

It is sad too that many of the churches and their members don't reach out to prisoners. Again I tell you don't let the actions of others control your state of mind. I am not here to change those who are closed-minded. I am here to offer hope to others who are seeking change. I have left many churches while I have been out for their attitudes towards ex-felons. That element may still exist when you get out. Don't let it trouble you. For there are many other true churches that practice the love God offers all! You must remember what Jesus said, in Matthew 25:32-45. He speaks of persons visiting him or not visiting him while in prison. And He replies in verse 45, "Then he shall answer them, saying: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me." So don't let the lack of true love from the churches that don't offer it bother you. There are plenty of other churches that are welcoming of prisoners.

Please feel free to drop me a line. Let me know how this book has helped you. You are encouraged to subscribe to the free newsletter we produce called "Dharma Seeds." We publish it every quarter and it is full of meditation instructions and useful life changing articles.

These same opportunities, the ones given to me while I was in prison, are yours for the asking. All you must do is surrender your lower self, and allow the Higher Self to grow inside you. Bless you as you start your path and know you are loved! You are truly a wonderful creation of God and you deserve to be free! Peace is with you!

## Chapter Twelve

### Volume 2 Issue 3 July –September 2009

I remember when I first arrived in prison. I was overwhelmed by the amount of “bible thumpers.” You know the type, always preaching and trying to prove to you and others that they are religious. This turned me off, and so were the majority of the other prisoners. However, there were a few who did seem to radiate their faith without having to preach. Those persons were what I would call spiritual, not just religious. They came in all shapes and sizes and religions. Some of them were Christians; others were Buddhists, Muslim or Jews. They lived their faith honestly. I wanted to know this type of honesty in one’s faith practice. But first I had to know what I believed in. I had to know, feel and find in my heart those principles that were true to me. No one else, just me.

I began to see that my own inner transformation was being birthed. I really felt the presence of the Holy Creator inside my body. It radiated throughout my body and mind. I thought differently, acted differently and of course reacted differently. Inside Folsom prison, back in 1995-1997 I began my journey of rebirthing my faith and understanding of my spirituality. I did not try to convince others, nor did I preach to them, I was just honoring what was right within myself. This is important to understand. Only I know what is right for me, and others know what is right for them. We can share our faith in a non-combative dialogue with others but not so as to convert them. It is a dialogue of what is happening to us, and how we came to understand this knowledge.

So many times in church, we try to become what others share about themselves and their faith understanding. We mimic our parents, teachers, or elders. But we first must understand God as he/she is to ourselves. We must not become copies of others, but instead bring forth the divine truth within ourselves. We do this by honoring what is right for ourselves. We can’t expect others to

like us or accept us if we are living someone else's understanding. We must have first hand knowledge of our faith before we are truly whole.

God speaks to each of us differently and separately from others. We answer to him/her not to others. When we can start to live our faith on our own terms and not be afraid to be different, then we can truly become one with the Divine.

Practicing our faith is not about preaching to others, or making others accept our beliefs. It is becoming comfortable within our own skin with our faith and how we practice this faith.

The time you have in prison is really a gift from God. It may not seem like it, but it truly is. It was for me and many others that began to practice meditation. In prison you have so much free time to study, read, and search out your faith. Through newspapers like this, other faith based newsletters or correspondence courses that help you find the faith that is right for you. No other time in your life can you find uninterrupted time as you do now in prison to study. Take the time to get to know yourself, define what is right for you. Don't get caught up in the games or drama that prison has so much of. Learn to use your time on your own terms. You might find others on the same path, and those are good friends to dialogue with. But you might find you are like a monk learning on your own by yourself.

The past twelve years since I was paroled, I have remained successful on the outside. I know you can too when that time comes for you. But first you must practice what you know to be true for yourself. So many others that I knew inside prison that become their real selves actually become happy. This happiness will lead to your own success.

Knowing the real you and practicing the path that is right for you will assist you in becoming the real you. God has created

you as a unique part of the body of Christ. Knowing your faith, as it is right for you allows you to become that perfected image of Christ in you. Anything else is prohibiting you from true happiness and true freedom. I encourage you to use your time in prison to spiritually grow. As you do you are opening up a new world for yourself. One that will help you become successful. Keep hope alive!

## **Volume Two Issue Supplement Summer 2009**

**Q:** “I try my best to keep positive but so many of the guards and staff here at my prison treat us badly. How can I keep from getting upset or angry at their actions?” *Alex G. Avenal State Prison, California*

**A:** Well Alex, first of all, it's all in your mind. You have a choice as to what you allow to be held and embedded in your own mind. No one controls your mind but yourself. Yes, we can get off track by allowing what others say to bother us. But that is our own choice. While I was in prison, I could allow what others say affect me or not. For the most part I did not allow the negative words of others to impact me. Meditation practice helps us to keep our mind in a balanced blissful state of peace. Now if someone called me an “ass” or something, I had a choice. To either get mad or cause a fight, or to simply go on and have the sort of day I wanted. Now the funny thing, if someone on the yard had said the same thing in German or French, (two languages I am not well versed in) then I would have no idea what they said. So this example shows us how our minds interpret what others say. It is our choice to allow it to affect us in a positive or negative way. It is not our path to change others, we can only change ourselves. I hope that helps.

## **Volume Two Issue Four October –December 2009**

Have you ever had one of those days, when it seems your mind does not respond in the way you thought it should? And of

course you open your mouth and crap simply comes out. Well, let me tell you, I write this with Egg upon my face!

A few months back in one of our issues, I gave some advice to a prisoner that I felt was correct on how to handle anger. In the midst of dealing with some very serious medical problems with my sister, sleeping less than six hours a night, taking care of her during the day time, and trying to hold down two part time jobs, well... My mind was not in the best frame to deal with anger. The funny thing, I had exploded over what a family member was doing to meddling into my sister's medical decisions, and I just blew up. When I phoned my sister, she simply said, "You know I was reading something today and it might help you right now." What she read to me were my own words taken from Dharma Seeds and while she was reading my words back to me, I felt like I was two inches tall.

Looking back upon that a few months has past, and I can laugh at the irony of this. It was funny and also proves a valuable point. Many of us on a spiritual path do try to incorporate the truth in all aspects of our lives. However, there are some very human moments when our actions don't quite live up to what we attempt to have in our life. A very dear friend of mine who is a member of Thich Nhat Hahn's meditation group here in Oklahoma City said to me once, "Buddhism is a practice... we have to remind our self ever so gently at time that is a practice... not a perfection."

While I think my advice on anger was right, I realize that I too must listen to my own advice. I am only human. We need to be loving to ourselves in our practice so that when the human element shows it face, it does not destroy what we have worked so hard to attain. We must see it as it is, and realize there is more work to do with ourselves. This journey that we're on, is that, a practice. Not a perfection.

So hopefully my little story on how human I can be, has brought a smile to your face. As well, I hope it shows that we all are struggling at times to be the best we can be. Simply put we drop the

ball at times, but that does not mean we are out of the game. It just means we need to practice a bit more!

## Volume Three Issue Two April – June 2010

Last issue we published an article written almost two thousand years ago by Ashvagosa. It is estimated he lived between 80-150 c.e. ***The Awakening of Faith*** is his most widely used text from the Northern School of Buddhism. Within this short treatise is a gem of all gems. The meditative verse which states, “The past is hazy as a dream, the present like lightening and future is clouds rising up suddenly.”

I remember the exact day I first heard this verse, it was in Sacramento, CA at my best friend Michael’s house. He introduced me to my meditation practice. That was over sixteen years ago. Basically if we can train our mind to live on in this present moment, that is where our bliss is. That is where God lives, that sacred space is all there is. The past is a dream, the future is like clouds rising up suddenly, meaning that past is not real, and we don’t know where clouds will rise. So why look for something that is not happening right now? It is very interesting to think that something so valuable as that short verse from Ashvagosa was written over eighteen hundred years ago. That simple truth is so valuable to our practice.

I remember when I was in prison, it is so easy to live in the past or try and live in the future. We regret the reason that placed us in prison, and we daydream for the day we will be outside again. However, when we do this, we are not living in the present moment. Prison environment can become our best training ground. We can, as many monks have done in their cells, turn our cells into the birthing ground for our transformation. The dimension of your cell is probably no different from the actual cells used by many monks over nineteen hundred years ago. As well, the present moment is where our transformation exists. Training our mind through our spiritual practices will help us realize the absolute truth

of Ashvagosha's verse, "The past is hazy as a dream, the present is like lightening, and the future is clouds rising up suddenly.

About six years ago I was in Sacramento, CA again for the marriage of Michael and his lovely bride Peggy. I was his best man. One of the gifts he gave me on this trip was a copy of *The Awakening of Faith*. In the back of this book was a saying I heard Michael make. That statement was, "**Don't let history get in the way of purpose.**" I personally know the struggle of prisoners whose history and the continued dwelling of mental thoughts in the past, robs them of their opportunity for positive changes in the present moment. I have seen many prisoners listly go through their day-to-day activities; all the while they are stuck in the past. Some of it may be understandable due to family and loved ones being absent from their life due to their imprisonment. Their mate has divorced them or left them and they simply feel all alone.

All that self-loathing only creates a very negative environment. It is not loving and it is not real. All of our actions from the past can't harm us. Yes, we may be living the karma right now because of our past, but that does not stop us from embracing the present moment for what it is. The present moment where you are is your path to true freedom. If our choices are linked to our spiritual awakening, then the present moment is all that matters.

I personally don't like the term "sin" or the word "evil". They denote a negative reinforcement from an overbearing religious context of control and manipulation. Simply put, and many can agree, that the term "not loving" is a more appropriate term. Are our actions and essence of our present life loving? Are our decisions and actions based upon love? If so, then we are living right mindfulness. Do we love ourselves? Do we love others? Do we operate out of love or fear? Fear is nothing more than lack of love. Fear comes from our mind in living in the past or the future. Love comes from the very center of this precious and sacred present moment. Nothing else exists. Only this present moment exists. What are you doing in this present moment? How are you

living this present moment? What are your thoughts focused upon? The present moment or the dream of the past or the suddenness of the future?

I hope that by our offerings from many different authors stimulate your mind in learning a path of contemplative practices. These practices are about the only true change that all traditions of various religions share. Many others and I can attribute our positive changes and our successes due to the practices we began in our cells. The adjective, “prisoner”, is a term that can be interchanged with the adjective, “monk”. The use of your time, how you spend it inside, will either be of benefit to you and others, or it can lead more to the cycle of suffering. Many of the authors we are blessed to use in Dharma Seeds are willing to let their work be re-published by us in their hopes that their writings will help many prisoners. The amount of love that is offered to you by many is extraordinary. Your life, your very existence is important to others and us. We care about you. That is perfect love!

I implore you to experience the very truth that Ashvagosha expressed in his treatise. Learn to live in the lightening of the present moment. Peace is with you always!

## Bibliography

### Chapter Two

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## Biography

### Mark D. Maxey

Mark strives for uniqueness in each line he pens. Through his writing, he deals with sensitive issues with directness and understanding. From light hearted to serious, his writing leads readers on a journey through an artist's mind. Along with his artistry, he is a brilliant organizer and dedicated friend. His words will take you into a strong heart and a deliberate mind. *-stated by John W. Reagor, Jr.*

Mark is an artist utilizing his talents through poetry, graphic arts, and photography. He has been published numerous times and has received various awards for his art. He spends his time in Oklahoma City working with others to improve and grow the artists community within Oklahoma. He serves on several art boards and volunteers his time teaching meditation and producing artists' workshops.

Mark also is in Holy Orders with the Eastern Orthodox Church, and helped start St. Raphael, the Archangel, Holy Catholic Church and Monastery, in Oklahoma City. He is also in a novitiate program with the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict. This order has direct ties to St. Benedict as well as with the Rinzai Zen traditions of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mark has helped form a non-profit organization in Oklahoma, Dharma Seeds Foundation. Dharma Seeds Foundation produces and publishes a newspaper regarding Chan Buddhist Meditation and Centering Prayer for persons incarcerated or in jails. The newspaper consists of educational and spiritual growth articles to aide in the positive change for inmates to facilitate their positive re-entry into society. The name of the newspaper is called "Dharma Seeds." All funds, whether income or principal, and whether acquired by gift or contribution or otherwise, is devoted to said purposes. All contributions (100%) go towards the publishing and mailing of the newsletter to those in jails and prisons. There is no paid staff just loving volunteers that offer their loving service to help those behind bars.

<http://dharmaseeds.st-raphael-monastery.org>

## **Resources for Prisoners**

### **Free Books for Prisoners**

**Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery** 16201 Tomki Rd., Redwood Valley, CA 95470

**Americana Buddhist Temple** 10515 North Latson Road, Howell, MI 48855

**American Buddhist Association** 10515 North Latson Road, Howell, MI 48843

**Association for Research & Enlightenment** 67th Street and Atlantic Ave., POB 595, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

**Barre Center for Buddhist Studies** 149 Lockwood Road, Barre, MA 01005

**Buddhist Peace Fellowship Prison Project** POB 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703

**Chuang Yen Monastery**, Program Director for English Program 2020 Route 301, Carmel, NY 10512

**Dallas Buddhist Association** 515 Apollo Road, Richardson, TX 75081

**Dharma Publishing** 2910 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702

**Freeing the Mindfulness**, C/O Saraha Buddhist Center POB 12037, San Francisco, CA 94112

**Healing Tao Prison Program** POB 471, Revere, MA 02151

**Human Kindness Foundation** POB 61619, Durham, NC 27715

**Larson Publications** Dept. K, 4936 Route 414, Burdett, NY 14818

**Liberation Prison Project** POB 31527, San Francisco, CA 94131

**Lionheart Foundation** POB 194 Back Bay, Boston, MA 02117

**Naljor Prison Dharma Service** POB 1177, Mount Shasta, CA 96067

**Prison Dharma Network** POB 4623, Boulder, CO 80302

**Ram Dass Tape Library Foundation** 524 San Anselmo Ave., #203,  
San Anselmo, CA 94960

**Snow Lion Publications** POB 6483, Ithaca, NY 14851

**Sutra Translation Committee** 2611 Davidson Avenue, Bronx, NY  
10468

**Siddha Yoga Prison Project** POB 99140, Emeryville, CA 94662

**Theosophical Book Gift Institute** POB 270, Wheaton, IL 60189

**Victoru Banner Publishing** POB 53461, Washington, DC 20009 ; book  
offered is “With You on The Path.”

**Wisdom Publications** 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144

**Woodland Publications** 2000 Arapaho Street, Woodland Park, CO  
80863

**Free or Low Cost Buddhist Publications & Newsletters**

**Prison Dharma** POB 4623, Boulder, CO 80306

**Dharma Foundation** POB 9999, Berkeley, CA 94709

**Dharma Friends** POB 7708, Little Rock, AR 72217-7708

**Dharma Seeds** POB 61175 ,Oklahoma City, OK 73146-1175

**Gassho, Atlanta Soto Zen Center** 1404 McClendon Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307

**Gateway Journal** Box 700, Ramsey, NJ 07446-0700

**Gay Buddhist Fellowship** 2215 R. Market Street, PMB 456, San Francisco, CA 94114

**Healing Tao Prison Program** POB 471, Revere, MA 02151

**Insight Meditation Society** 1230 Pleasant Street, Barre, MA 01005

**Purple Lotus Seed** 636 San Mateo Ave., San Bruno, CA 94066 (specify English or Chinese)

**Shenpen Osel** 4322 Burke Ave A., Seattle, WA 98103

**Turning Wheel** POB 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704-0650

**Newsletters that focus on prisoners rights and criminal justice issues**

**The Beat Within** 275 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103

**California Prison Focus** 2940 16th Street #307, San Francisco, CA 94103

**Coalition for Prisoners Rights** POB 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504

**Families Against Mandatory Minimums** 1612 K Street NW, Suite 700,  
Washington, DC 20006

**National Lawyers Guild Prison Law Project** 143 Madison Ave. 4FI,  
New York, NY 10016

**North Coast Xpress** POB 1226, Occidental, CA 95465

**The Prison and Jail Project** POB 6749, Americus, GA 31709

**Prison Legal News** 2400 NW 80th Street, #148, Seattle, WA 98117

**Southland Prison Newsletter** PMB-339, 955 Massachusetts Ave.,  
Cambridge, MA 02139

**Free Buddhist Sutras**

**Dharma Seeds** POB 61175 ,Oklahoma City, OK 73146-1175

**Spiritual Resources/Christian**

**Bede Griffiths Trust c/o Osage Forest of Peace**, 141 Monastery Road,  
Sand Springs, OK 74063

**Christian Bible College and Seminary**, 10106 East Truman Road,  
Independence MO 64052-2158

**Emmaus Correspondence School**, 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque IA 52001

**Lamp and Light Publishers, Inc.**, 26 Road 5577, Farmington NM 87401

**Loved Ones of Prisoners (LOOPS)**, PO Box 14953, Odessa TX 79768

**The Missing Link**, PO Box 40031, Cleveland OH 44140-0031

**Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries**, PO Box 1530 Woodinville WA 98072-1530

**Prison Mission Association / Bible Correspondence Fellowship**, PO Box 2300, Port Orchard WA 98366

**Fellowship of St. Silas**, PO Box 822169, Vicksburg, MS 39182-2169  
(Eastern Orthodox)

**United Brethren Jail and Prison Outreach Ministry**, Kirk and Crissy Killingsworth, 1278 Glenneyre Box 219, Laguna Beach CA 92651

**Spiritual Resources/Hindu & Yoga**

**The American Gita Society**, 511 Lowell Place, Fremont CA 94536

**Association of Happiness for all Mankind (AHAM)**, 4368 NC Hwy 134, Asheboro NC 27203

**The Gangaji Foundation Prison Project**, 505A San Marin Drive Suite 120, Novato CA 94945

**ISKCON Prison Ministry**, 1400 Cherry St, Denver CO 80220

**NITHYANANDA VEDIC TEMPLE**, 9720 Central Ave., Montclair, CA 91763

**Osho Viha Meditation Center**, PO Box 352, Mill Valley CA 94942

**Sai Baba Bookstore**, 305 West First St, Tustin CA 92780

**Siddha Yoga Meditation Prison Project / SYDA Foundation**, Prison Project, PO Box 99140, Emeryville CA 94662

**Sivananda Yoga Prison Project**, Prisoner Outreach, PO Box 195, Budd Road, Woodbourne NY 12788

**Yoga on the Inside Foundation**, 1256 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90024

**Further Resources for Psychological / Spiritual Transformation (Ageless Wisdom / Interfaith / Metaphysical / Native American / Psychology)**

**Anthroposophical Prison Outreach Project**, 1923 Geddes Ave, Ann Arbor MI 48104-1797

**The Art of Living / Prison SMART Program**, PO Box 3642, Boulder CO 80307

**Association for Research and Enlightenment**, 215 67th St, Virginia Beach VA 23451

**Contemplative Outreach**, PO Box 737, Butler NJ 07405

**The Conversations With God Foundation / Prison Outreach**, MB#1150, 1257 Siskiyou Blvd, Ashland OR 97520

**Friends of Peace Pilgrim**, 7350 Dorado Canyon Road, Somerset CA 95684

**The Heart Mountain Project**, c/o Doug Booth, 1223 South St. Francis Drive Suite C, Santa Fe NM 87505

**Larson Publications**, Dept K, 4936 Route 414, Burdett NY 14818

**Mettanokit**, 187 Merriam Hill Road, Greenville NH 03048

**Miracles Prisoner Ministry (A Course In Miracles)**, 501 East Adams St,  
Wisconsin Dells WI 53965

**Native American Pride Committee**, 3256 Knight Court, Bay City MI  
48706

**Rosicrucian Fellowship**, 2222 Mission Ave, Oceanside CA 92054-2399

**The Rosicrucian Fraternity**, PO Box 220, Quakertown PA 18951

**Science of Mind Foundation**, 2600 West Magnolia Blvd, Burbank CA  
91505

**Surviving The System**, Traci Lister, PO Box 1860, Ridgeland MS 39158

**White Mountain Education Association**, 543 Eastwood Drive, Prescott  
AZ 863030

## **Legal Support**

**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) / Prisoner's Assistance  
Directory**, National Prison Project Publications, 915 15th St NW 7th Floor,  
Washington DC 20005

**Centurion Ministries, Inc.**, 221 Witherspoon St, Princeton NJ 08542-3215

**Davrie Communications** 13215-C8 SE Mill Plain #144, Vancouver, WA  
98684

**EDPUBS**, PO Box 1398, Jessup MD 20794-1398

**Families Against Mandatory Minimums**, 1612 K St N.W. Suite 700,  
Washington DC 20006

**Grassroots Investigation Project (GRIP)**, Quixote Center, PO Box 5206,  
Hyattsville MD 20722

**Innocence Project**, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, 55 5th Ave 11th  
Floor, New York, NY 10003

**Lewisburg Prison Project**, PO Box 128, Lewisburg PA 17837

**National Lawyers Guild**, 132 Nassau St. Room #922, New York NY  
10038

**The National Death Row Assistance Network of CURE (NDRAN)**,  
Claudia Whitman, 6 Tolman Road, Peaks Island ME 04108

**Prison Legal News**, 2400 N.W. 80th St #148, Seattle WA 98117-4449



